

VZCZCXRO2340  
OO RUEHDBU RUEHPW  
DE RUEHBUL #1319/01 1460547  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
O 260547Z MAY 09  
FM AMEMBASSY KABUL  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9091  
INFO RUCNAFG/AFGHANISTAN COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHBU/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES PRIORITY 0070

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KABUL 001319

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/26/2019  
TAGS: [KDEM](#) [PGOV](#) [AF](#)  
SUBJECT: CANDIDATE CHALLENGE PERIOD ENDS

REF: A. KABUL 1232  
[1](#)B. KABUL 1196  
[1](#)C. KABUL 1140  
[1](#)D. 08 KABUL 613

Classified By: Political Counselor Alan Yu for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: The May 23 deadline for filing of complaints against registered candidates has passed. The Election Complaints Commission (ECC) collected a total of 268 challenges. Of those, the UN-sponsored Disarmament and Reintegration Commission ("D and RC") submitted 119 names with alleged links to illegally armed groups (IAGs). The ECC will automatically disqualify these candidates, whose links to militant groups have been confirmed through the Disarmament of Illegally Armed Groups (DIAG) process. The ECC began May 24 informing disqualified candidates, who will have two weeks to withdraw their candidacy, disarm, or demonstrate compelling evidence they have cut their links to IAGs. The ECC will decide whether each of the remaining 149 complaints should lead to disqualification on a case by case basis. The Independent Election Commission (IEC) hopes to submit the final candidate list by June 9. End Summary.

-----  
Complaint Filing Period Ends  
-----

[1](#)2. (U) The ECC collected 268 complaints from Afghan citizens, political parties and candidates, against registered candidates by the May 23 deadline. The ECC has not released this list of names, but said 231 of the complaints pertain to provincial council (PC) candidates, and 37 are against presidential or vice presidential candidates. Of the 149 non-IAG complaints, the ECC says most pertained to war crimes or crimes against humanity. The ECC will decide each case based on established criteria, which include links to IAGs, criminal convictions, and campaign finance violations. The ECC head said in a press conference in mid-May that the criteria for disqualification do not include human rights violations and suspected corruption.

-----  
Remapping Improves Integrity of Candidate Vetting  
-----

[1](#)3. (C) The Government of Afghanistan (GIROA) views the DIAG process as a political and legal mechanism to block armed militants from seeking elected office. Christian Lamarre, head of the Disarmament and Reintegration Commission ("D and RC"), briefed the diplomatic community May 21 on the DIAG candidate vetting process. Lamarre maintained that the integrity of the vetting process has improved significantly over the last year, by shifting to greater Afghan ownership. Its staff has increased to over 400, only 15 of whom are internationals. Afghan staff has been trained to base decisions on established, consistent criteria. Lamarre foresees further improvements to the process as the 2010 elections approach.

¶4. (C) Lamarre explained the update, or "remapping," of the DIAG databases beginning in September 2008 in anticipation of national elections. Provincial governors were in charge of updating lists, with strong cooperation by security-related ministries. Previously limited to a small number of provinces and low-level militants, the DIAG list now contains over 3000 individual names from all 34 provinces and all levels of IAG leadership. From the new list, D and RC identified a group of 100 eligible for immediate arrest or disarmament. The Ministry of Interior (MOI) has used the new information to begin monitoring the activities of 148 probable members of Taliban shadow governments in southern Afghanistan.

¶5. (C) The D and RC worked with the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) throughout the remapping process to warn individuals through press conferences and radio spots that, if found to have active links to militant groups, they could be disqualified from running for office. When the registration period closed May 16, the DIAG secretariat identified around 200 possible matches out of 3300 candidates. The DIAG secretariat then revalidated all the names through all its five partners (ISAF, UNAMA, the Minister of Defense, National Directorate of Security and Ministry of Interior). With the additional intelligence these partners provided, the D and RC feels confident that the final list it submitted to the ECC is accurate and less politically-based than the previous list.

-----  
Next Steps for IAG Candidate Disqualification  
-----

KABUL 00001319 002.4 OF 002

¶6. (C) With official vetting of the DIAG list complete, the ECC began notifying candidates May 24. The Ministry of Interior is assisting by delivering notifications to disqualified candidates because of the ECC's limited resources and the short time frame for notifications and challenges. Candidates have two weeks to respond to these notifications by either withdrawing their candidacy, presenting compelling evidence they have cut ties to IAGs, or by initiating the disarmament process through their DIAG field offices. The DIAG will report back by June 8 with a list of individuals who complied. The ECC expects to deliver the final list to the IEC by June 9. Unlike the 2004-5 elections, a "promise" to disarm will not suffice; candidates must enter the formal disarmament process.

¶7. (C) Lamarre predicted that about one-third of the PC candidates will be cleared by demonstrating they have cut ties with IAGs. (Note: He reminded the group that, if cleared, an individual becomes untouchable and cannot be added to the DIAG list at a later date). He also predicted that about half of those notified will either withdraw their candidacy or disarm. There will be a final meeting on June 8 of the DIAG security partners, who would then vote if there were differences of opinion on the final disqualifications. At least one representative of each security partner must vote. ISAF has been discussing with DIAG advisor to the President Stanekzai the need for appropriate messaging to encourage disqualified candidates to honor the ECC's decision and that authorities would deal seriously with any disruptions to the election process.

-----  
ARJ and AMA Are Included on DIAG List  
-----

¶8. (C) Shortly before the candidate challenge process ended, British and Canadian intel officers in Helmand and Kandahar, respectively, learned that individuals of concern may have dropped from the DIAG list. These included Abdul Rhaman Jan ("ARJ") and Amir Mohammed Akunzada ("AMA") in Helmand, and Haji Saifulla (aka Safi Ullah) in Kandahar, all of whom have

strong ties to armed groups, in addition to their narcotics trafficking links. The U.S. Embassy joined the UK in sending a letter ) under established DIAG rules ) with evidence of links to IAGs. We underscored that inclusion of these individuals on the ballot would ensure their election and undo any and all progress on security, counternarcotics and governance in Helmand. The DIAG considered the additional supporting evidence and determined these individuals would remain on the list that it submitted to the ECC on May 23.

-----  
The Best Imperfect Process  
-----

¶9. (C) Lamarre argued the DIAG process represented one of the most successful examples of institution building in Afghanistan to date. He professed confidence that the Afghan employees understood the possible political implications of each name added to the list. While he was adamant that the integrity of the DIAG process had improved significantly over the last year, Lamarre underscored that it remained imperfect. For example, collecting credible information remains problematic, especially since remapping included Afghanistan's least permissive areas for the first time. He also admitted, when pressed, that the D and RC had taken the need for regional balance into account when finalizing the list. D and RC officials were concerned about the political impact if the majority of the names appeared from the south and the east.

¶10. (C) Lamarre also pled for continued cooperation from the diplomatic community if officials were to attempt to lobby for removals or additional disqualifications. He emphasized that the international community has been briefed and should stand behind the final decision of the DIAG.

¶11. (C) Comment: We and other donors are watching the final decisions of the IEC. The process has undergone considerable improvement over the past year, and we are working with the IEC to ensure that individuals with links to IAG are kept off the ballot. We have daily discussions with them about this process. End Comment.  
EIKENBERRY